

[4 May, 2007]

RAJYA SABHA

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, give a chance to the Member from Tripura (*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 422. (*Interruptions*)... That matter is over. (*Interruptions*)... That matter is now (*Interruptions*)... Question No. 422.

New Trains for Kerala

*422. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL. Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry is aware of the acute difficulties faced by passengers from Kerala to various destinations and back because of the absence of sufficient train services; and

(b) if so, whether his Ministry would take urgent steps to start new train services from Thiruvananthapuram to Bangalore, New Delhi, Mumbai and other destinations and back to mitigate the hardships of the passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Sufficient train services to various destinations are available from Kerala. To meet extra rush during summer, winter and periods of peak demand, special trains are also run and extra coaches are attached to the existing trains to the extent feasible and justified.

(b) Following additional train services including extension and increasing frequency have been announced in the Budget 2007-2008:—

- (1) Thiruvananthapuram-Mumbai Garib Rath Express (bi-weekly).
- (2) Increase in frequency of 6315/6316 Thiruvananthapuram-Bangalore City Express from weekly to tri-weekly.
- (3) Increase in frequency of 6527/6528 Kannur-Yesvantpur Express from weekly to tri-weekly.
- (4) Increase in frequency of 6603./6604 Mangalore-Thiruvananthapuram Maveli Express from tri-weekly to daily.

- (5) Extension of 364 Thiruvananthapuram-Kottayam Passenger from Nagercoil.

Further, 380 summer specials have been planned from Kerala to Mumbai, Chennai, Mangalore, Bangalore, Hubli and Delhi to clear the extra summer rush during 2007-2008.

SHRI K. E. ISMAIL: Sir, I thank the Minister for starting a Garib Rath from Trivandrum to Mumbai and also increasing the frequency of some other long-distance trains. While speaking at Trivandrum, the Minister has promised a Garibi Rath from Trivandrum to Delhi. He has also promised a new train from Trivandrum or Cochin to Bangalore. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister wheather these trains will be started this year considering the increase in the number of passengers in these routes.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, for the information of the Hon. Member, Kerala is provided with sufficient train services, in the sense that it has got trains connecting all the major cities. That is one. It has got trains connecting all the capitals except Dehradun. As regards the train for Bangalore, which the Hon. Member has asked for, they have already got six trains. They have got eight trains for New Delhi and ten trains for Mumbai. They have got eight trains for the northern destinations, eleven trains for central and western destinations, nine trains for east and north-eastern destination and twenty-two trains for southern destinations. In the last four years, we have given 21 new services to Kerala, as such, is given sufficient trains to take care of passengers travelling from Kerala to other States and vice versa.

SHRI K. E. ISMAIL: Sir, recently, several cases, of theft and robbery have been reported in the Kerala-bound trains. At the New Delhi station, generally, trains are brought to the platform just before the time of departure. And there is not enough police personnel inside the trains for the safety and security of the passengers. So will the Government take urgent steps in ensuring that trains are brought to the platform, at least, half-an-hour before the time of departure and also see to it that enough police personnel are present in the trains during the entire journey?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, the main question relates to increasing the number of trains, yet, I will answer his supplementary regarding security in trains.

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Whenever a train is brought from the yard, it is properly checked and only then it is brought to the platform. As regards another concern of the hon. Member that the trains should be brought half-an-hour before the time of departure, as everybody knows, the New Delhi railway station has to handle too many trains and the availability of platforms is limited. However, we will consider it and see how far we can broaden the time between the arrival and departure. That is number one. Secondly, as regards recent reports of robberies, etc., and the need for enhanced security in trains, I would like to inform the hon. Member that RPF and GRP people are escorting about 2600 trains. Now, even the women compartments are being taken care of by deploying our own women constables, and for increasing that strength, we are now recruiting more women constables also so that the women compartments are taken care of. So, in that way, we are trying to minimise theft and robbery in the trains

SHRI TARINI KANTARGY. Sir, though the question pertains to train services from Thiruvananthapuram to Mumbai and other destinations, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to whether there is any proposal for increasing the frequency of trains running between Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram. I would like to know whether there is any such proposal pending with the Government. This is an important service which connects the North-East with the Southern most part of our country. Hence there is a need to increase the number of trains.

SHRI R. VELU: As of now, there is no proposal with us because we have already announced in the year's Budget as to which are the trains for which we intend to increase the frequency. However, we will examine it during the next Budget.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: Sir, the Hon. Minister has said just now that there are sufficient number of trains from Kerala connecting all States' headquarters. But the problem is that are connecting, but these are not adequate. That is the problem. I can prove this point from your own reply. The last sentence of your reply says that 380 Summer Special Trains have been planned from Kerala to various State capitals. Now, what is the need for 380 special trains if there are already adequate numbers of trains? So, you are contradicting your own answer. Why is it that we need to have this many special trains? It is only because the present number of trains is inadequate. That is why they have to run special trains. I can tell you

of my own experience. It is quite difficult even for MPs to get reservation in trains from Tiruvananthapuram to Bangalore. In fact, dozens of buses are plying from Kerala to Bangalore every day, and these buses are charging exorbitant rates from the passengers. There is an allegation - I do not know whether the Minister has come to know of it - of some collusion between the lower railway officials and the bus operators. I would like to know whether this is correct or not. I am only saying what I have heard from others.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, let him reply.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Is it a fact? Are you aware of the fact that dozens of buses...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Prof. Kurien, let him reply now.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Sir, I wanted to put a specific question. Will he introduce an additional train from Trivandrum to Bangalore?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, let me clarify to the first part of his question. He talked about Summer Specials.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Without clarification, reply to the last question that he has put.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, he talked about the Summer Specials. In fact, the Southern Railway, last year, ran about 1,808 special trains. Why? That was because of the requirement during festivals and on other occasions when people move from one place to another for religious festivals. So, we have Winter Specials, Summer Specials because of the requirement of trains. We always do that. In fact, for Kerala, we had run during 2004-05 501 special trains; in 2005-06, 896; in 2006-7, 669. This year, we are running 380 summer specials.

Coming to his point regarding Bangalore, taking into account the requirement this year, we have proposed to increase the frequency of the Thiruvananthapuram-Bangalore City Express from weekly to tri-weekly; that means, almost two more trains will be introduced.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Make it daily.

SHRI R. VELU: And also, the Yeshwantpur-Cannanore Express, again from weekly to tri-weekly. This is the additional capacity provided in these

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trains. After all, we are also aware that there is a demand everywhere because the road transport fare is more than double of the railway fare.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri K. Chandran Pillai. (*Interruptions*)... Let him speak.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Sir, the Minister, in his reply, has actually made a statement that adequate trains are there. My point is this. Let the Minister sit with us. I am not putting all the questions here. But I want to bring a serious matter to the attention of this House; it is related to railways in Kerala. Sir, there was an assurance from the hon. Prime Minister and there was an assurance from Lalaji also for an amicable settlement of the question of the bifurcation of the Palakkad Division. (*Interruptions*)... No, no. Sir, I want the help of the Chair in putting forward my point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the problem with you? (*Interruptions*)... Please take your seat. Let him speak.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Let me put my question. You allow me to put my question. That is my right. I want the help of the Chair in putting forward my point. Sir, my point is that there was an assurance from Lalaji (*Interruptions*)... Dr. Ramadoss, you are a Minister and this is not concerned with your portfolio (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN: Sir, this is not related to the main question.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: You are interrupting me and this is not fair. (*Interruptions*)... I want the help of the Chair in putting forward my point. I am very much entitled to speak about an assurance given by the Prime Minister or the Minister concerned. Why are you denying me that opportunity? Let me make my point. You can argue then, (*Interruptions*)... I said it initially that it is related to a serious matter pertaining to railways in Kerala. The question of the bifurcation of Palakkad is a serious question for Kerala.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is a different question. You come to this question. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: No, Sir. When will I get a chance to put my question? (*Interruptions*)... The bifurcation of Palakkad Division has not yet been decided finally. But it is being pushed unauthorisedly by this Minister. That is my point. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI R. VELU: It is unfair on his part. (*Interruptions*)... Please, withdraw your statement. (*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seats.

SHRI R. VELU: He should withdraw this statement.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: No, no.

SHRI R. VELU: You cannot make an allegation against a Minister.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: No, no. I know employees are being transferred from one area to another forcibly. So many complaints are there. I stand by what I have said.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat.

SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: I can establish the truth of the point that I have made in the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 423.

Approval for registration of products of M/s Dow Chemicals

*423. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken cognizance of the report of disclosure made in the 13th February, 2007 report of the US Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) about the confession of M/s Dow Chemicals of having bribed Government officials in India some years ago for securing registration/approvals of their products;

(b) if so, whether any enquiry has been conducted on the basis thereof;

(c) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Yes, Sir. Based on the findings of the preliminary enquiry, the Ministry has decided to refer the case to the Central Bureau of Investigations for further action.